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Race awareness

Seminar uses humiliation to educate on blacks' plight

MIAMI (AP) — Some Dade County employees are being "sensitized" to racism in seminars that call for them to throw marshmallows at each other and place cups of water on their heads while humming *The Star Spangled Banner*.

That puts the 250 employees in a humbling situation so they can understand how black Americans feel in a white-dominated country, says Charles H. King of Atlanta, who created the program.

King's "urban awareness" seminars are part of a three-year \$1.12 million project to reduce stress for managers and to improve interpersonal relationships among Metro-Dade Transportation Administration employees.

The federally financed project began last week with the first of King's seminars, which will run through July. King, 57, says people who take part in his program will go home better people, more caring about the plight of black Americans.

But before they do, they will:

✓ Throw marshmallows at each other. That is to show disagreement with what another participant is saying.

✓ Join hands and form a circle, drawing tighter as another participant tries unsuccessfully to get inside. That is an example of how "institutional racism" excludes minorities, King says.

✓ Be insulted, badgered and bullied by King.

Groups of about 30 employees, mostly middle- and upper-level supervisors, will attend the two-day courses for \$200 each. The seminars will cost about \$69,000, including up to \$6,225 for King's expenses.

The expense money covers travel for King and his \$150-a-day suite on the 16th floor of Miami Beach's Deauville Hotel. King says his program is worth it. Many graduates of the seminars — there are 100,000 of them nationally — praise his techniques.

The former Baptist preacher started the seminars almost inadvertently 13 years ago at Wittenberg Uni-

versity in Ohio, where he taught black history to white students. One day he exploded and talked of his fury about oppression for 20 minutes.

Then he walked out of the classroom. When he returned minutes later, the students applauded.

"I got their attention," he said.

He has held seminars at several major corporations, for the Navy, for local governments in Atlanta and Boston, and has a \$140,000 two-year contract with the Central Intelligence Agency, he said.

Though King has never formally studied psychology, he says he has learned a lot by being black. He also worked as a staff analyst for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders and as the director of the Human Relations Commission in Gary, Ind.